

Sleep Well, Dream

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Sleep Well, Dream

by [authorialintent](#)

Summary

Dream has rough days, sometimes.

Luckily, George is there to help.

Today was hard. But go home, get in bed, and I'll read you the Minecraft End Poem like a bedtime story.

Notes

my first ever one-shot :) if you like it please let me know <3

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Somewhere, in the back of his mind, Dream recognized what he was doing. Running. Forcing himself to think of nothing but the road, nothing but the parking lot in front of him. The streetlights made some parts of the asphalt look light -- a stark contrast to the shadows around him.

Dream glanced at his phone.

2:41 AM

There were so few cars around at this time. He was the only car in the parking lot, and as he drove, he had only seen about one or two other cars.

The world, as it seemed, was asleep.

Dream reached over and shut off the car radio. Even the soft music from it felt a bit too overwhelming now, with so little in front of him. He reclined his seat back as far as it would go, and stared at the roof of his car, trying to think of nothing.

Sometimes, it would be this way -- he would feel too much, to the point where it was almost physical. It had been a rough week: there hadn't been a single night that he had managed to get over eight hours of sleep. There were a lot of things he needed to get done -- so much so that it was overwhelming.

He knew that putting it all off would only make it worse. But somehow, even tackling his tasks one at a time seemed to be too much recently. Unfortunately, he often found himself too overwhelmed to do anything, thus resulting in him doing nothing. It all came to the forefront this week, when he had multiple hard deadlines to get things done.

He got everything done, of course -- he needed too. He had shoved everything to the side, going into full productive mode for the week. It had worked -- Dream had gotten everything done. But forcing himself to do everything in a short time frame, with the added stress of the upcoming deadlines, was a lot. Frankly, everything should have been done within the span of a month, not in a week.

Dream sighs, closing his eyes. *It's so stupid*, he thinks. *I shouldn't feel overwhelmed, but I still do.*

It's not very helpful to focus on what you should be feeling, he reasons to himself. *Just because you don't think you should be feeling something doesn't make you stop feeling it.*

Dream forces himself to take a deep breath.

Well, what do I want? Dream thinks. Before he fully realizes what he's doing, he grabs his phone, navigating to George's contact.

I don't want to be alone, Dream thinks, listening to the phone ring. George picks up after the fourth ring.

"Hey Dream," George says. "I just finished my stream." Vaguely, Dream recalls that George had been speedrunning.

"Did you end up with the world record?" Dream asks. He had been on VC with George earlier, but had left about two hours before he ended. He tries to make his tone sound light, teasing, maybe -- but it falls flat. George, it seems, doesn't notice this.

"I didn't even beat the game," George says. He laughs, a little bit. "I died right near the end of my last run."

"There's always next time," Dream responds. "I can help you, next time."

"Do you want to hop on Minecraft for a bit?" George asks. "I might sleep soon."

"I'm not home right now," Dream says.

"It's like 2 AM for you," George says. "Why aren't you home?"

"Just thinking too much, I guess," Dream says. "I went for a drive, and now I'm just parked in some random parking lot."

"Why there?" George asks. Dream's known him long enough that he picks up on the hint of concern in his voice.

"I didn't know what else to do. Didn't know where else to go," Dream says. He had given up trying to sound like nothing was wrong -- George knew him well enough that it was pointless.

"Why not just stay at home?" George asks.

"I felt restless," Dream says. *It's okay to not be okay*, Dream thinks. *You're fine*, he tries to convince himself. "I didn't want to really be anywhere."

"What's up?" George asks. Dream hears him move, like he is sitting up. His tone is fully concerned now -- he's not even trying to hide it. "Are you okay?"

"I don't really know. Just stress -- I feel overwhelmed. There's so much to do, and there are so many people to disappoint," Dream says.

"Was it the video?" George asks. Dream had been up late the past few days, trying to edit his latest video, get the music score *just right*. He had delayed posting it a few times, to which his fans were sure to remind him of. They meant well, he knew, most of it was lighthearted. But it was still overwhelming.

"Kind of?" Dream says. There's a beat, and at George's lack of response, Dream knows that he is waiting for him to continue. He sighs, and takes a breath.

"You guys wanted me to finish it and post it -- so it's not even that I'd be letting myself down, I'd be letting you down too." It was a video idea that they had all been excited about -- both George and Sapnap had helped him a lot, and put a lot of work into it.

"You couldn't let me down," George says. It's a simple sentence, but there's something gentle in his tone. Something caring.

Dream sighs, then runs his hand through his hair. "I don't know, it gets to be a lot sometimes. Usually I'm fine -- I have good friends, and I get to do so many incredible things with so many people. But it's a lot. Everything combined is a lot."

"Did something happen?" George asks. Dream can tell he's confused, but also concerned -- he doesn't blame him. There's no particular *reason* for Dream to be feeling bad. Somehow, this makes it worse.

"It's a little of everything I think. Once there was nothing else to work on my brain kind of just shut down," Dream says. "I feel stupid -- I should feel relaxed, because the things that I've been stressed over are done with now."

He had just put out his video a few hours ago, he had streamed yesterday, and he had even finalized some milestone merch design. Dream had done enough work that he could take the weekend off.

"I'm worried about you," George says, and it's so *rare* that George actually vocalizes what he's feeling, that it makes Dream feel guilty.

Dream sighs. "I just keep thinking about how I maybe could have made things a little better. I

know that they like the video. It's doing well--"

"Well then, things are good," George interrupts. "I watched the video -- you did a great job. You streamed recently as well -- that should be enough for now."

Dream thinks for a while before he speaks again. George is right -- the cause for all of Dream's recent stress was gone, now. By all logical standards, he should be fine. But sometimes, when he let himself focus only on work for too long, once there was nothing left to do, Dream found himself feeling empty. He overthought things, picked apart every aspect of *everything* until it felt like nothing. It was exhausting. Even now, his mind wouldn't stop searching for something to say.

George is going to think that this is stupid, Dream thinks, he's going to get annoyed at you, he's going to leave, you'll be alone, he's going to leave, you'll be--

"I don't feel like enough sometimes," Dream says, finally -- partially to fill the silence, and partially to shut up his internal monologue. He cringes at how small he sounds, how sad.

"You are," George says. There's no hesitation in his voice.

Dream doesn't come to George when he gets like this, not often. It's actually quite rare that he gets into a genuinely sad mood -- Dream is usually happy and confident. Some part of Dream feels guilty not being okay -- like somehow, he's doing wrong by George by not being happy.

"I'm sorry, I just feel a lot right now," Dream says. He feels his eyes watering, but he manages to keep his voice steady. "I feel sad."

"That's okay," George responds. It's a gentle tone -- not one he uses often. Dream has heard it occasionally, but never around anyone else. Only when they're alone. "It's okay to be sad. It means you're human."

"What do you do when you feel sad?" Dream asks.

"Call you," George says. Something about the matter-of-fact tone in George's voice makes Dream ache. "Then I start to feel better."

"I make you feel better?" Dream asks. He sits up in the seat, stretching as much as he can in the enclosed space.

"It's hard to be sad with you," George says. "You know me too well. It's nice to not feel alone."

"What do I do? To make you happy?" Dream asks.

"You exist," George says.

"You're such an idiot," Dream says. He means for it to sound teasing, but his tone still falls flat. He sighs, then leans back down. "I don't know. I just don't feel great."

"I'll be here even if you don't feel great," George says. "And I'll still be here when you're happy."

"Sometimes I think I'm afraid of being happy," Dream says. "Of things being good. Because if things are good, that means that there will come a time where they're not good anymore."

"If you think like that, you're sabotaging yourself," George responds. "Just because things were better at one time doesn't mean that they're not good anymore." Dream sighs, and runs his hand through his hair.

"Imagine the happiest day of your life. But once the day is over, it's over. How do you keep going after that? Knowing that nothing else will be as good?" Dream explains. He stares at the roof of his car as he speaks. It's a grey color.

"Well, you don't know it in the moment," George says. "I don't think you ever really know when it's the happiest day."

"That's part of the problem. If I don't know if I'm the happiest I will ever be, how am I supposed to enjoy it?" Dream says. He sighs again. "I don't know. Maybe I'm just being dumb."

George is quiet, for a moment. Dream feels slightly awkward at the silence. He's about to speak again -- apologize for pushing his emotions onto George. It's not his fault that Dream doesn't feel well, and it's not his obligation to be here. But before he can, George speaks again.

"Well, you could have the best day in your life. But then there's always the day after," George says. He speaks slowly, as if contemplating his words.

"What happens after, then?" Dream asks.

"You keep going," George says. It's a simple statement, but Dream can feel the genuineness behind the words. But despite this, he still feels a slight numbness.

"That's kind of depressing," Dream says.

"I don't think so," George responds. His tone is thoughtful.

"Why not?" Dream says.

"I don't think that I think of happiness as something that's quantifiable like that," George says.

"How else do you think of it?" Dream asks.

"There's a lot of different ways to be happy," George explains, "and I don't think that they're all the same. Today I woke up and my cat was sleeping on me. That made me happy." Dream smiles, slightly. George had sent him a selfie when he had woken up, saying he couldn't move because the cat was still sleeping. Dream had saved the photo.

Dream puts his phone on speaker. As he listens to George, Dream navigates to the photo on his phone.

"When you called me too -- I was happy. But those are two different kinds of happy, I think. It doesn't help to dissect emotions like that," George continues. "Sometimes, you just feel things. If the things are good, then that's good." Dream is quiet, for a moment, contemplating. He stares at the photo of George -- he has his cat sleeping on his chest, and he offers a sleepy smile to the camera. His hair is messy, and it's clear that he had just woken up. *Adorable*, Dream thinks. *Mine*.

"And if things aren't good?" Dream asks.

"Then I'm here, and I'll try to make them better." George says. Dream feels a certain warmth in his chest. It makes him smile.

There's a bit of hesitation before George continues. "I care about you, you're one of my best friends." There's a beat. "I know you know that already, but I thought it might be nice to hear."

"I love you too," Dream says. George giggles at this, and Dream can almost see his smile. He

knows exactly what expression George is making right now -- shaking his head, but with that fond look.

"Are you still in your car?" George asks

"Yeah," Dream says. He sits up, and moves his seat so it is upright once more.

"You should go home. Get some sleep," George says.

"I don't feel tired," Dream responds.

"Get in bed, and I'll *put* you to sleep," George says. His tone is light, and it makes Dream feel so warm.

How do you do that George? Dream thinks. How did you turn warmth into an emotion?

Dream laughs. "What are you going to do? Read me a bedtime story?"

"I'll read you the Minecraft end credits," George says.

"You actually have to beat the game to read those credits you know." Normally, George would respond to Dream's teasing in kind, coming up with some snarky response. Dream is somewhat surprised by the genuineness of his next statement.

"I'd do it," George says, "for you." It goes quiet between them, for a moment. It's a sincere kind of quiet, one that Dream can feel the weight of in his chest. It's not a bad sort of heaviness. It's a lovely one.

George laughs, lightly, diffusing the tension. "Or I could just look it up," he says. Dream hears him shift, then the tapping sounds of his keyboard.

"I see the player you mean. It has reached a higher level now, it can read our thoughts."

"You skipped a line," Dream says.

"How do you know?" George asks.

"I must have read this poem at *least* a hundred times, and that's not even an exaggeration," Dream says. "I probably could recite the whole thing."

"I'm not perfect," George says. Dream has to bite his tongue to stop himself from saying you are. "Shall I continue, sweetheart?"

The pet name, as it seems, did not come out as teasing, as George might have expected. It was a little too genuine, a little too loving. There's a slight hesitation after George speaks, as if he didn't mean to say it -- tried to catch it at the last moment, but failed. Dream smiles to himself, choosing to not acknowledge it.

"Alright," Dream responds, laughing slightly. "Darling." He adds the pet name as an afterthought, trying to make sure George didn't feel uncomfortable. His tone is a little lighter, still teasing. But there is so much softness in his voice, and his words are so gentle. Dream hears George laugh before he continues.

"I like this player. It played well. It did not give up."

"You skipped a line again."

"Oh, sorry," George says. "*I do not like this player. He sucks.*" Dream laughs.

"I don't think that's how it goes," Dream says.

"I have it open, that's exactly what it says," George responds. "They must have changed it. The next line is '*George is great, Dream sucks.*'"

"You're such an idiot," Dream says. There's no malice behind his words, and he is sure that George can tell he's smiling.

"If you drive home, and get in bed, and get cozy, I promise you I'll read you the entire thing, and I won't skip any lines," George says.

"You'll probably fall asleep before I get home," Dream says. He puts his phone on speaker, then places it on the passenger seat. "I was driving for a while -- I'm probably at least an hour away."

"I'll stay on the call," George says. Dream puts on his seatbelt as he listens. "I'll read you more lines while you drive."

"You could probably read me the whole thing in that time," Dream says. He puts the key in the ignition, starting his car.

"I'll read slowly," George says. He yawns.

"If you're tired, you can sleep," Dream says. "You don't have to be here."

"I want to be here," George says. His tone has grown sleepier, as they've spoken -- his voice is soft, and Dream wouldn't be surprised if he actually fell asleep on call. "You're important."

"I know you're tired," Dream says. His voice is softer, now. Less sad. "You can leave the call if you want. You helped me feel better."

"I like it here," George says. He sounds so tired, and Dream finds it adorable. "It's cozy."

"In the call?"

"Yeah," George says. "With you."

Dream laughs, softly, and shakes his head.

It is quiet between them as Dream pulls out of the parking lot. As he pulls onto the road, George starts to read again.

"I like this player. It played well. It did not give up," George says. *"It is reading our thoughts as though they were words on a screen. That is how it chooses to imagine many things, when it is deep in the dream of a game."*

"You don't actually have to read to me, you know," Dream says. George ignores him, reading the next line.

"Words make a wonderful interface. Very flexible. And less terrifying than staring at the reality behind the screen."

"Seriously," Dream says. "You don't have to."

"You don't like my reading?" George asks.

"I do," Dream says. It's calming, just listening to him. The words are familiar. Safe. "I like it a lot, actually."

"Let me do something nice," George says. "You always do nice things for me."

Dream mock-gasps. "George? Being nice? Unheard of."

There's quiet, for a bit. Normally, George would have laughed it off -- fired back with some quip, and they would have gone back and forth for a bit. But there's something a little too honest in their conversation tonight -- something a little too real.

"Do you really think I'm not nice to you?" George asks. He sounds a little sad.

"What?" Dream asks, surprised. "No, of course you are."

"You're really nice to me," George says. The vulnerability in his voice is almost piercing. "You literally ordered me food last week, because I was having a rough day."

Dream remembers that day. George had sounded so exhausted -- he had been on two separate streams, back to back, and he was meant to stream afterwards as well. But George had to forego his own stream, saying that he had felt a little sick.

A little sick turned out to be an understatement. George had sounded absolutely miserable when he called Dream after the streams, saying that everything felt hot and cold at once, and that it hurt to breathe. Apparently, he had taken some medicine to help him get through streaming -- the pills had worn off sometime around the halfway point of the second, leaving him feeling miserable once more.

Dream had told George that he shouldn't have gone on the streams in the first place. But George had promised, and he would have felt too bad to cancel at the last minute. Plus, he was home alone for the weekend -- if he hadn't been on stream, he likely would have just sat in bed, alone, feeling miserable.

Dream had ordered him food from a nearby ramen place that happened to be George's favorite, and after George had eaten, Dream had stayed on call with him until George fell asleep.

"That wasn't a big deal," Dream says. "You were sick and alone."

"It was to me," George says.

"You're my friend, George," Dream says. "You deserve to be taken care of."

George hesitates, slightly, before he speaks again. "You're more than just my friend."

"What do you mean by that?" Dream asks.

George doesn't answer the question. He just continues to read. Dream decides to drop it.

"They used to hear voices. Before players could read. Back in the days when those who did not play called the players witches, and warlocks. And players dreamed they flew through the air, on sticks powered by demons," George says.

Dream stops at the next red light. He lets himself close his eyes, to focus solely on George's voice, the words he read. He read slowly, putting care behind each word.

"What did this player dream? This player dreamed of sunlight and trees. Of fire and water. It

dreamed it created. And it dreamed it destroyed. It dreamed it hunted, and was hunted. It dreamed of shelter."

These were words that Dream had read so many times before, but somehow, when George read them, they became visceral. He could see the trees, the sunlight shining through the leaves, the shadows casted on the ground. He could see the fire, the running water.

"I like listening to you," Dream says. "I like your voice."

"You like my voice?" George asks. Now that there was nothing he was directly reading from, his words sounded sleepy.

"Yeah," Dream says. "Because it's yours."

"You don't mean that," George says. The uncertainty in his tone is clear.

"I do," Dream says. He makes no attempt to hide the fondness in his voice. George laughs, and continues reading.

"Hah, the original interface. A million years old, and it still works. But what true structure did this player create, in the reality behind the screen?" George reads further. *"It worked, with a million others, to sculpt a true world in a fold of the [scrambled], and created a [scrambled] for [scrambled], in the [scrambled]."*

He pauses, for a moment.

"Do you ever wonder what the scrambled bits are meant to be?" George asks.

"I used to, the first few times I read it," Dream says. "I don't think about it too much anymore." He pauses to make a turn. "I think that you're meant to fill it in yourself. There's not really a right answer." Dream can vaguely hear George typing.

"I looked it up," George says. "There's no actual answer. You just fill it in yourself."

"That sounds right," Dream says.

"Then it doesn't mean anything," George says. "Doesn't that mean that nothing you put in there is correct?"

"Just because it's not correct doesn't mean it's wrong," Dream says. "Read it out again."

"What, I thought you memorized it," George responds cheekily. "I don't read for free."

"You've read to me for the past forty minutes for free," Dream points out.

"You're paying me with friendship," George says.

"You're such an idiot," Dream says. "Just read the last part again." George laughs, but obliges.

"It worked, with a million others, to sculpt a true world in a fold of the [scrambled], and created a [scrambled] for [scrambled], in the [scrambled]."

"Put in universe, for the first scrambled," Dream says. "To sculpt a true world in the fold of the universe."

"Alright," George says. *"It worked, with a million others, to sculpt a true world in the fold of the*

universe."

"You come up with the next one," Dream says. George hums, seemingly contemplating.

"Love," he says. "and created a love."

"What's the next line?" Dream asks. He's close to home now, about ten minutes away.

"And created a love for [scrambled]."

Dream smiles, and his next words are so fond that he can feel the meaning behind them in his chest.

"And it created a love for you, George."

George makes a flustered sound. "What?"

"The universe created love for you," Dream says. "All for you."

"All for me?" George questions. He still sounds a bit uncertain.

"Well," Dream says, "maybe not the universe. But I did." He laughs, and it is so soft.

"You're so stupid," George says, but there's no malice behind his words. Just softness.

"You fill in the last one," Dream says.

"It worked, with a million others, to sculpt a true world in a fold of the universe, and created a love for Dream, in my heart."

"That's not what I said," Dream says, but he is smiling so hard his cheeks hurt.

"Just because it's not what you said doesn't make it wrong," George says, mocking Dream's earlier sentiment. "It's true to me." Dream laughs, and pulls into his driveway.

"I just got home," Dream says. He puts his car in park, and sits back, listening to George.

"Really?" George asks. Dream reaches over and grabs his phone. "It doesn't feel like an hour."

"We've been on call for about two and a half hours," Dream says.

"Doesn't feel like it," George says. "Time flies."

"Just when I'm with you," Dream says, teasingly. He unbuckles his seatbelt and moves to get out of the car.

"Well then, hurry up and get in bed," George says. "I'm tired."

"I thought you said you'd stay up with me," Dream says.

"I said I'd stay up *for* you," George responds. "There's a difference."

"You promised me you'd read me the poem," Dream says. "Like a bedtime story."

"I will," George says. As Dream walks to his front door, George continues reading. *"It cannot read that thought. No. It has not yet achieved the highest level. That, it must achieve in the long dream of life, not the short dream of a game."*

Dream unlocks his front door. He walks in, shuts the door behind him, then turns on the light. He takes care to be quiet -- Sappnap is sleeping. He had been asleep when Dream had left.

"Does it know that we love it? That the universe is kind?" George reads. He pauses, and Dream waits for him to speak again as he kicks off his shoes.

"Do you know that?" George asks.

"Know what?" Dream responds.

"That you are loved?" George says. He sounds tired. Dream wouldn't be surprised if he wasn't fully thinking about what he said. "That the universe is kind?"

"I know it," Dream says.

"Do you know that I love you?" George says. Dream chuckles.

"What was that last part George?" Normally, George would play it off, pretending that he didn't know what Dream was talking about. But he had been up for a while, and he was likely too tired for that now.

"I love you," George says. Dream has heard him say this multiple times by now -- it no longer made him blush as hard as it did the first time. But tonight, hearing George say it in that tone, the gentle one used for no one else, combined with the genuineness in their conversation -- Dream feels a familiar warmth creep up his cheeks.

"I love you too," Dream says. As he walks up the stairs, George reads further.

"*Sometimes, through the noise of its thoughts, it hears the universe, yes,*" George says. Dream walks into his room. "*But there are times it is sad, in the long dream. It creates worlds that have no summer, and it shivers under a black sun, and it takes its sad creation for reality.*" George goes quiet, for a moment, before he speaks again.

"Are you still sad?" George asks. Dream hums, and thinks for a bit -- he feels much better. But there's still a bit of sadness there. Still a bit of an ache.

"A little bit," Dream says. He searches through his dresser for a t-shirt and shorts -- he had been wearing the same clothes for the past two days, and he would be lying if he said it didn't make him feel grimy. "But that's not your fault. It will go away."

"I'm sorry," George says. "I don't know how to make you feel better."

"You don't have to apologize," Dream says. "You do help me feel better. I feel a lot better than before"

"I never know what to say," George says.

"You're perfect," Dream says. "I wouldn't want anyone else." George goes quiet, at this.

"I don't want anyone but you," he says, and it feels a little too exclusive. It makes Dream stop searching for a shirt, halts all his movement for a moment. He half expects George to continue reading, but he doesn't, not yet. "I wish I were with you."

It's stupid, because Dream knows that George doesn't mean for his words to sound so sad, and that the distance between them doesn't mean anything -- George is his best friend. But his tone,

combined with the intimacy in his words (either intended or unintended), brings Dream to tears.

"I'm sorry," he says, and his voice is shaking. "I'm sorry we're not together." He takes a deep breath.

"Hey," George says. "Someday, right? I can read to you in person. But for now I'm here, and we're kind of together." His words are fast, tumbling over each other.

George isn't great with people crying, Dream vaguely remembers. He forces himself to take a few deep breaths, then speaks again.

"What would you do if I were there?" Dream asks.

"Sleep," George says.

"In my bed?" Dream asks. George lets out a choked sound, and Dream has to bite back a laugh.

George is quiet for a bit longer. Dream lets out an awkward laugh. "I'd play with your hair."

"Really?" George asks.

"Yeah," Dream says. "If you would let me."

"I think I'd like that," George says. "I'd let you." George laughs, and it's awkward, but it's also so sweet. "I like being with you. Even now, just kind of together."

"Yeah," Dream says. "Kind of together."

For a moment, Dream feels bold.

"We're together, sort of, right George?" The question is teetering towards the line they had drawn. It was clear to anyone who had seen them interact that they were friends, but whether they were something more -- that was always left in the grey area. They would encroach upon the subject, every once in a while, but this question was the closest Dream had ever come to directly asking about it.

George is quiet for quite some time. Dream tries not to think about it too much. He pushes away the urge to change the subject, instead focusing on the clothes in front of him.

"To cure it of sorrow would destroy it. The sorrow is part of its own private task. We cannot interfere," George reads, seemingly ignoring the question. Dream feels his heart drop.

"George--"

"Sometimes when they are deep in dreams, I want to tell them, they are building true worlds in reality. Sometimes I want to tell them of their importance to the universe. Sometimes, when they have not made a true connection in a while, I want to help them to speak the word they fear."

Dream mulls over these words, for a bit. *I want to tell them of their importance to the universe -- speak the word they fear.* He pulls out a shirt and a pair of basketball shorts.

"What are you afraid of, George?" Dream asks. He shuts his dresser, a bit more forcefully than he intends to. George seemingly falters, but continues reading.

"It reads our thoughts," he says. Dream sighs, loud enough that he knows that George can hear him. George falters, again. He stops reading.

"You read my thoughts, sometimes," George says. His tone is afraid, and Dream feels a pang of guilt. "You ask me questions that I think you already know the answer to."

"I'm sorry," Dream says. "That question was a lot." He gets like this, sometimes -- he asks things without fully thinking of the consequence, obsessed with answers but not thinking about what it costs to obtain them.

"It's not that," George says. "It's not bad. It's just -- a lot."

"Am I a lot?"

"No, not you," George says. "Wanting you is a lot."

"You want me?"

"I-" George stops himself, and Dream hears him take a deep breath. "I don't want anyone else, I think."

"I'd want you back," Dream says. "If you wanted me like that."

"Like what?"

"Like-" Dream cuts himself off, forcing himself to think about what he says next. "Like something more than what we are now."

"Something more?"

"It doesn't have to be more complicated, if it's a lot," Dream backtracks, slightly. "But you're more than just my friend too, I think." George is quiet, but seemingly contemplating.

"Is that alright?" George asks. There's something vulnerable in his tone -- Dream wants nothing more but to be able to reach out and hold him, run his fingers through George's hair and reassure him. He hears George take a breath before he speaks again. "Is it alright to just say that, for now?"

It's the *for now* that makes Dream blush. *For now*, Dream thinks.

"Just more than friends, for now?" Dream asks.

"Yeah," George says. "To figure it out later, if that's okay."

"Can I call you mine?" Dream asks. The question tumbles out before he can fully think about it. But he hears George inhale sharply, and part of Dream thinks he sounds flustered.

"I think I'd like that," George says. "To be yours. For you to be mine."

"Who says I'd be yours?" Dream asks, teasing. George laughs.

"You are," George says.

"That's it for now?" Dream asks.

"Yeah," George says. "You're mine, and I'm yours, and we're more than what we were, but that's it for now."

"We can figure it out later," Dream says.

"There's no rush," George agrees. Dream can hear his smile in his tone.

Dream yawns. He pulls off his shirt, and puts on the new one. He continues to speak as he changes.

"I should shower, but I don't want to," Dream says. "I feel exhausted. Like, emotionally exhausted."

"That's okay," George says. "Tomorrow is a day."

"That's easy for you to say, you never shower," Dream says. He throws his dirty clothes to the corner of his room, decidedly leaving them to deal with in the morning.

"Shut up," George says. Dream laughs, then turns off the light in his room.

"Keep reading," he tells George. Dream gets under his covers.

"Are you in bed and cozy?" George asks.

"Yes," Dream says. The only light in his room is from his phone. He places it on his pillow, then stares up at his ceiling. "I'm warm."

"Sometimes I do not care. Sometimes I wish to tell them, this world you take for truth is merely [scrambled] and [scrambled], I wish to tell them that they are [scrambled] in the [scrambled]. They see so little of reality, in their long dream."

"More scrambles," Dream remarks.

"Yeah," George says. "Want to fill them?"

"Reread the first part again," Dream says. George obliges.

"Sometimes I do not care. Sometimes I wish to tell them, this world you take for truth is merely [scrambled] and [scrambled]," George says. Dream hums, thinking.

"You and me," he says. "This world is merely you and me."

"You're so stupid," George responds.

"The world is you and me Georgie," Dream says. He smiles. "Nothing else."

"Not too sure about that," George says. "I'm pretty sure that other things exist."

"Nothing that matters," Dream says. "I love you."

"You're so stupid," George says, his tone impossibly fond. "I love you too." He continues reading.

"I wish to tell them that they are [scrambled] in the [scrambled]," he says.

"You fill this one," Dream says. George hums, thinking for a moment.

"Small," George says.

"Small?" Dream asks.

"It's nice to feel small sometimes," George says. "Not so overwhelming."

"Yeah," Dream says. "I guess so."

"Small in the grand scheme of things," George says. *"I wish to tell them that they are small in the grand scheme of things."*

"Read the whole thing?" Dream asks.

"Sometimes I do not care. Sometimes I wish to tell them, this world you take for truth is merely you and me, I wish to tell them that they are small in the grand scheme of things. They see so little of reality, in their long dream."

"I like that," Dream says. "It makes a lot of sense. It feels cozy."

"I like you," George says. He yawns, and Dream can picture him now: under his covers, reading the poem off of his phone. His heart aches, and he knows he is long gone. It's the best kind of aching. A lovely kind.

"And yet they play the game. But it would be so easy to tell them. Too strong for this dream. To tell them how to live is to prevent them living. I will not tell the player how to live. The player is growing restless. I will tell the player a story. But not the truth."

Dream lets George's voice wash over him, allows himself to fully listen. He can feel every part of himself relax, and everything is so warm, and so soft.

"No. A story that contains the truth safely, in a cage of words. Not the naked truth that can burn over any distance. Give it a body, again. Yes. Player. Use its name. Dream. Player of games. Good."

George yawns.

"Get in bed, George," Dream says. "I'm in bed too. We can be comfortable together."

"Alright," George says. Dream hears him move, hears the rustling of sheets.

"What side of the bed do you sleep on?" George asks.

"I'm on the right side right now," Dream says. "Like, my left hand is closest to the edge."

He hears more rustling.

"Why do you ask?" Dream says.

"I'll sleep on the left side of my bed," George says. "I'll leave that side for you."

"You're such an idiot," Dream says, but his voice is so fond that it might as well be an I love you.

"Are you comfortable?" George asks.

"Yeah," Dream says. "I am."

"That's good," George says.

"Are you comfortable?" Dream asks.

"Yeah," George says. He continues reading.

"Take a breath, now. Take another. Feel air in your lungs. Let your limbs return. Yes, move your fingers. Have a body again, under gravity, in air. Respawn in the long dream. There you are. Your

body touching the universe again at every point, as though you were separate things. As though we were separate things."

As George speaks, Dream takes deep breaths. He inhales as deeply as he can, holding the air in his lungs. As he exhales, he thinks of his heart. He focuses on the way it beats, imagining the blood cells traveling from his chest to his fingertips, and then back again. *I am alive*, he thinks. *I think, and therefore I am*. As George reads further, Dream thinks of him -- he thinks of love.

I love, Dream thinks. *Therefore I am*. George reads further, and Dream clings to his every word. He imagines mountains, the trees: a quiet sort of calmness. He thinks of the sky: the stars, the planets, of *their* planet, one spinning rock orbiting around a star. He thinks of the distance between him and George, the thousands of miles. He thinks of George's voice: soft, in the night, and quiet. He loves.

"Who are we? Once we were called the spirit of the mountain. Father sun, mother moon. Ancestral spirits, animal spirits. Jinn. Ghosts. The green man. Then gods, demons. Angels. Poltergeists. Aliens, extraterrestrials. Leptons, quarks. The words change. We do not change."

George stops reading.

"Who do you think the narrators actually are?" George asks. Dream takes a bit to respond, having been fully submerged in the words that he had been reading.

"You and me," Dream says, jokingly.

"You could at least read your part if that's the case," George says.

"I like listening to you," Dream says. "This is nice. I like you." He hears George laugh, but it's so fond.

"You're so cute," George says. Dream smiles, pulling his blanket up more, getting more comfortable as George continues.

"We are the universe. We are everything you think isn't you. You are looking at us now, through your skin and your eyes. And why does the universe touch your skin, and throw light on you? To see you, player. To know you. And to be known. I shall tell you a story."

"That's kind of scary," Dream says.

"What is?" George asks.

"To know," Dream says. "And to be known."

"It's not so bad," George says.

"Do you think you know yourself?" Dream asks.

"Yeah, I'd think so," George says. "I think I know myself pretty well. But there are lots of different versions of myself, if that makes sense."

"Well, that's obvious," Dream says. "You're not going to act the same around every person."

"But then which one is me?" George asks. "I think they're all different sides of me, and I know them all pretty well."

"They're all you," Dream says. "You're the sum of many parts."

"Which part do you like?" George asks. There's something teasing in his tone, but there's also something unmistakably fond.

"All of them," Dream says. "I love every part of you."

"I love every part of you too," George says. Dream can hear his smile.

"Once upon a time, there was a player. The player was you, Dream." As George continues reading, Dream once more lets himself visualize it, imagining everything.

"Sometimes it thought itself human, on the thin crust of a spinning globe of molten rock. The ball of molten rock circled a ball of blazing gas that was three hundred and thirty thousand times more massive than it."

Dream thinks of the sun, of the warmth. He thinks of summer days, of running across grassy fields, of the sky and the ground and everything in between.

"They were so far apart that light took eight minutes to cross the gap. The light was information from a star, and it could burn your skin from a hundred and fifty million kilometres away."

Dream thinks of the stars: he thinks of picnic blankets at night. He thinks about stargazing, pointing out the constellations. He thinks of George, lying next to him. Being able to reach out and intertwine their fingers. *Would you lay with me and watch the stars, George? Would you?*

"Sometimes the player dreamed it was a miner, on the surface of a world that was flat, and infinite. The sun was a square of white. The days were short; there was much to do; and death was a temporary inconvenience. Sometimes the player dreamed it was lost in a story."

Dream thinks of sandboxes. He thinks of the sandcastles he built as a child. He thinks of the games he used to play, running around, using sticks as make-believe swords. He thinks of laughter. He clings to the words that George reads, and thinks of laughter: the bright kind. He thinks of the way that George looks when he laughs: his eyes scrunched up, his cheeks pink.

"Sometimes the player dreamed it was other things, in other places. Sometimes these dreams were disturbing. Sometimes very beautiful indeed. Sometimes the player woke from one dream into another, then woke from that into a third."

You're a lovely thing to dream of, George. Dream is half asleep at this point, only barely hanging on to the words he says. *You're such a lovely thing to imagine as I fall asleep.*

"Sometimes the player dreamed it watched words on a screen."

He's sure that George must almost be asleep as well. It's such a cozy atmosphere they've created: in a call, alone, both in bed. George reading him the Minecraft end poem like a bedtime story. It's almost achingly intimate.

"Dream?" George asks. Dream is half-conscious, too tired to respond, but still awake enough to hear George speak.

"Did you fall asleep?" he says. Dream doesn't answer, but moves his phone closer, and feels the vibration of George's voice in his chest.

"I'll stay here," George says. "If you can hear me, then I'm staying. I'm probably going to fall asleep soon. But it's nice knowing you're here with me."

Dream hears George's sheets rustle against his phone. In his half-dazed state, Dream can picture him clearly: curled up, eyes half-lidded, hair tousled. Softer, somehow, in the moonlight. Gentle. His.

In the last moments before he falls asleep fully, he hears George, faintly. Barely above a whisper.

"Sleep well," George says. "I love you."

End Notes

twitter: @authorialintent (that's a one not an L)

this was originally supposed to have a companion fic which is dream reading the rest of the poem to george :) i'll write it if people want it & this fic doesn't flop

if you like it hit that kudos button!! also leave a comment!! i get instant serotonin from seeing notifications in my inbox :)

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